



The Trinity Pulpit

A Faith Worth Remembering 2 Timothy 1:17

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The memory is a very powerful gift from God. It has the power to bring us tears and laughter. It has the power to inspire us, cause us fear and anxiety. It is our memory that enables us to learn from our own experiences and the experiences of others. It is our memory that can evoke all types of emotions and feelings.

It is interesting that our memory can do this without us actually experiencing personally an event. If I were just to use the word remember or remembrance we quickly have a picture in our minds of the event and the feelings which are thoughts produce.

Let me give you an example. If I say "Remember the Alamo", you quickly have a picture in your mind of that event although none of us were there when the battle of the Alamo occurred, or when this became a battle cry. From reading books, from pictures we have seen or maybe from a personal visit to San Antonio, we produce feelings and pictures from just three little words "Remember the Alamo."

If I say this Memorial Day let us remember the fallen. Then each of us might have a different response in our thinking. For some of us, such a statement is personal. You served in the military, and you have witnessed the death of another soldier in battle. For others it is a second hand experience. What is really interesting is that the memory for us might be from World War II, Korea, Viet Nam or even from the Gulf War, or our current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The term remember the fallen is a memory that creates images and feelings.

I might say let us remember lest we forget. That statement has come to represent our need to remember those that died on 9/11. That

event which we either experienced on T.V. or more personally is the defining event in several generations' lives. We are to remember those who serve us everyday as firefighters or policemen as we always remember lest we forget.

Memory is also useful in faith. In fact, our faith is based on memory. Our faith is based on the memory of the Hebrew people who remembered God's power in the Exodus and God's presence throughout their lives. They taught their children to remember God. Our faith as Christians is built on the memory of the experience of the disciples' with Jesus. They remembered their experiences and told it to others or wrote it down. The result is we have our own experience with Jesus because someone remembered their experience with Jesus.

No wonder Jesus said when it came to the Lord's Table do this in remembrance of me. Memory is the great gift of God to us in regards to not only our faith, but our whole lives. As we take time to remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom this weekend, I think it might also be a time to remember those who influenced our faith.

The question I have for us today is what kind of faith is worth remembering? Paul was spending some time remembering those who had come along side him in ministry and faith. As he recalled his relationship with his son in the ministry, he gave thanks to God for his relationship with Timothy and for Timothy's love for him. Paul mentions Timothy's tears as the result of their separation and how he longed to one day see Timothy again to restore his joy. In this moment of remembrance Paul also was reminded of Timothy's faith. Paul describes Timothy's faith and in this description I believe we hear the kind of faith that is worth remembering.

A faith worth remembering is a sincere faith. Paul writes I am reminded of your sincere faith. The



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word for sincere is sometimes translated genuine or authentic. Let's think about what this descriptive word for our faith really means. What does it mean to have a sincere faith? When we think about someone who is sincere we think about someone who has the right intentions. They have the desire to do what is right even though sometimes the circumstance might keep our desires from becoming a reality. A sincere faith has to do with our desires. What do we desire? Do we desire to do what is pleasing to God? Even though we might fail (and we will), God knows our hearts and our desires. A faith worth remembering has the proper desire for God. We want to please God with our lives.

Yet, the word means more than just sincere. The word also has the quality of that which is genuine. What is a genuine faith? It is authentic and it is real. Jesus would call the Pharisees of his day white-washed tombs. They were those who looked good on the outside and yet were dead on the inside. Their act of faith was nothing but show and their faith was not authentic.

We live in a knock-off culture. A large part of our economy is to take a product that was produced with quality material, took many man hours to produce and then find a way to use cheaper material and mass produce it. The result is that we can all own something that looks like the original and we can fool others with our "copy" of the original. No one has to know if it is the real authentic item. This is where we get such terms as genuine leatherette! A sincere faith is not a faith that is just for show, but it has a depth to it.

It is a faith that stands the test of time. In 1 Peter 1:6 we find these words:

In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have to suffer all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus is revealed.

Peter is reminding us that we all have to face trials. Peter says we will face trials of many kinds. He also reminds us that these trials are for only a little while. Then he tells us the purpose of trials in our lives. We are reminded that we all have trials. People of

faith and people who do not believe all have trials. Yet, our trials have a purpose. Our trials are one of the ways God creates faith and perfects faith in our lives. They are not intended to rob us of faith, but to build faith. Notice what Peter says about our faith. It is our most important possession. Unlike gold which is refined by fire and yet perishes, our faith is of greater worth. Our trials then prove us to be genuine. It is our trials that prove that our faith is real and can stand the test of time.

One of the most popular shows on TV is the Antique Road Show. In whatever town it shows up in, people clean out their attics, take pictures off the wall and come to discover if they might have something of great worth of which they were not aware. They bring the item to the antique specialist and they inspect them. With paintings they look at the texture, the signature and the canvas. With furniture they look at the building material, as well as how it is constructed. It is the inspection that determines if the item is of value and if it is genuine.

In many ways the trials of life are the inspectors of our faith. They prove whether our faith is genuine. A faith worth remembering is one that is sincere, that is has the right desires but also stands the test of time.

Another quality Paul mentions is that a faith worth remembering is a living faith. Paul says I remember your sincere faith that once lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now lives in you. Timothy's faith was a living faith. What does it mean for us to have a living faith?

When I hear the word living faith I think it means a faith that permeates the whole of our lives. We have developed a way for us to compartmentalize our lives. In our ability to do this we do not make the connection between our faith and the rest of our lives. Studies have shown us that one of the great challenges of the church in the future is to help our young adults and adolescence learn to have a holistic approach to their lives and their faith. Many adolescence these days do not connect their faith to the rest of their living. It is not that they are making a decision of rebellion, it is that literally their minds do not connect the two. So, someone can claim to be a person of faith and they are, but then they can act in ways that are completely contradictive to the teachings of Christ. It is not that they should know better. It is that they do not know they do not make the connection. When you bring this contradiction to their attention it really does not compute.

Now before we get to judgmental toward one generation please understand that our children watched us compartmentalize our lives. We come to worship, we speak of Christ but there are also contradictions in our lives. The result of course is that we taught not so much by what we said, but what we did that you could have a faith that was not a living faith.

Yet, a living faith touches the whole of the person. If we want a living faith then we want our faith in Christ to inform all of our living. So, when it comes to my work my faith informs my thinking and the way I work. When it comes to my marriage, my faith tells me the kind of spouse I am to be. When it comes to my family my faith guides me as a parent or a child. When it comes to my money my faith informs my budget. When it comes to how I relate to others and how I view others who are different than me whether it be race, social class, economic class, or nationality I am informed by faith. A faith worth remembering is a living faith.

There is one more quality. A faith worth remembering is one that is growing. Paul tells Timothy to fan into flame the gift of faith that he has received from his mother and grandmother. The picture is taking something that small and causing it to grow. It is the picture of someone taking just a few embers but refusing to let the fire go out and doing everything possible to bring those small smoldering embers to a blazing flame. A faith worth remembering is a faith that is growing.

Paul tells Timothy of the signs of a growing faith. First there is power and not timidity. The Holy Spirit would give Timothy the confidence to share his faith. A growing faith is evident in the fact that we grow more comfortable in sharing our faith. A second quality is love. The love Paul is talking about is a love that forgives and endures the most difficult people and opposition. The growing faith is one that we can see our love for others growing. A growing faith is also one of self discipline. A growing faith is one where the discipline to practice our faith is growing.

What does your faith look like? As you think about your faith can you say that is growing? Are you growing in confidence? Are you growing in love for others? Are you growing in your discipline to practice your faith? A faith worth remembering is a growing faith.

A few years ago Mark Schultz penned these lyrics to a song that became very popular. The song is a plea from God to remember God in all the moments of life. Listen to his words:

*Remember me
In a Bible cracked and faded by the years
Remember me
In a sanctuary filled with silent prayers
Remember me
When the color of the sunset fills the sky
Remember me
When you pray and the tears of joy
fall from your eyes
Remember me
When the children leave
their Sunday school with smiles
Remember me
When they're old enough to teach
Old enough to preach
Old enough to leave
CHORUS
Age to age and heart to heart
Child of wonder child of God
Remember me*

This is really what God is asking us to do with our lives. We need to remember God in every part of life. When we do we will have a faith worth remembering. One that is sincere, living and growing. Let's live lives with a faith that is worth another remembering.

